

Thank you!

The Division of Oral Health and the SC Oral Health Advisory Council and Coalition would like to thank Commissioner Earl Hunter for his support of our mission to improve oral health in South Carolina. We wish him continued success as he begins a new journey.

2011 Carlos Salinas Award Recipient

Dr. John Sowell, an oral surgeon who practices in Greenwood, was named the recipient of the 2011 Carlos Salinas award. Dr. Sowell received the award and special recognition at the Medical University of South Carolina's 13th Annual Continuing Education Course on "Dental Program for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Individuals with Special Health Care Needs."

This award was established by the S.C. Dental Association, the S.C. Oral Health Advisory Council and Coalition, and Specialized Care Company to honor a dentist for excellence in providing care to and advocacy for individuals with special health care needs. The award, in its fourth year, is named for Carlos Salinas,

D.M.D., in recognition of his commitment to assisting people with special needs.

"Dr. Sowell has shared his expertise, his professionalism, his dental skills, but mostly, his heart in serving special needs patients for many years," said Christine Veschusio, director of DHEC's Division of Oral Health.



Word of Mouth

Promoting the importance of good oral health

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Creating local community solutions to address health disparities

Lack of access to dental care has made the national news with the very unfortunate loss of an Ohio man's life from a dental infection. In South Carolina, volunteers provided free dental care at several events. While young people will camp out overnight to access concert tickets, we are not accustomed to seeing adults camping out in an effort to receive dental care as we did at these recent events. These outreach efforts bring to the forefront the oral health disparities that exist among our residents. Undoubtedly, these disparities have been magnified by the increase in unemployment, general decline of the economy and loss of payment for dental services by the Medicaid program.

communities to address the health care needs of those who experience barriers to receiving care.

The goal of this issue and of our 11th Oral Health Forum is to initiate the discussion on how to **SEALtheGAP** in our safety net system. How do we create local community solutions that result in improving health disparities? This issue of Word of Mouth looks at the problem from several different angles.

Promoting Prevention describes how community water fluoridation contributes to the strengthening of the safety net by preventing tooth decay for people of all ages.

SEALTHEGAP
ADDRESSING ORAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

**December 9
2011**

"One unique aspect of South Carolina is its ability to join together to develop community level responses to unmet needs."

The term "safety net" implies a vision of a net of programs in place to capture those who slip through the health care system. In reality, however, our net has gaps or holes that cause everyday people to suffer pain and poor health. Our goal is to **SEALtheGAP**, just as we know a dental sealant will prevent the tooth from developing a hole or cavity on the biting surface of the tooth, we want to seal the gaps between the network of emergency rooms, community health centers, hospital clinics, free clinics, school-based health clinics, and volunteer-driven programs to deliver dental care to the poor, the uninsured, and the underinsured.

One unique aspect of South Carolina is its ability to join together to develop community level responses to unmet needs. SC's health care safety net reflects the responses of local

In *Making the Connection*, the story of the SC Head Start Health Network highlights the commitment of the-Head Start health coordinators in linking their children into systems of health care which include the dental home. *South Carolina Steps Up* shares information on some recent outreach efforts.

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South Carolina steps up to SEALtheGap

SC Mission 2011 on August 5-6, 2011 offered free medical, dental, and vision care to the underinsured and uninsured ages 17 and older, on a first-come first-served basis. The event, a partnership between the United Way, BlueCross BlueShield of SC Foundation, area hospitals and others provided basic dental care including cleanings, basic fillings, and extractions.

- Dental Care was provided 36 straight hours beginning 6am on Friday and ending at 4 pm on Saturday.
- Dentists and hygienists performed 925 X-rays, 125 cleanings, 235 extractions, and 140 restorations for 500 patients.
- About 10 dentists with support staff and volunteers provided services.

The SC Dental Association sponsored its third Dental Access Days (DADs) event in Florence on August 26-27, 2011. The free clinic for adults offered services on a first-come, first-served basis.

- The number of treatment areas increased from 80 to 110.
- Close to 2,000 people received services
- Over 400 dental professionals and 100 volunteers provided services and assisted individuals.

Services included cleanings, fillings, extractions, and root canals on front teeth.

South Carolina
Oral Health
Advisory Council & Coalition

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Making the Connection with the Local Provider... The South Carolina Head Start Health Network

The South Carolina Head Start Health Network was established in 1997 and is the only Health Network still active in the Region IV Head Start Association. The Health Network is an affiliate of the South Carolina Head Start Association. The purpose of the HS Health Network is to strengthen all Head Start programs by providing information, identifying needs, and developing strategies to meet those needs through partnerships and collaborations with local, state, and federal resources. Members of the Health Network are health, nutrition, disability and mental health managers/ coordinators as well as nurses and registered

by establishing community partnerships for the delivery of high quality health services; providing Head Start children, families and staff access to quality health services and encouraging families to advocate for health services for their child during their child's enrollment in a Head Start program, and after their child enters school.

The health coordinator serves as the crucial and essential link between the Head Start center and the local providers including dentists, pediatricians and general practitioners. Head Start's commitment to wellness embraces a comprehensive vision of health for children, families, and staff.

"My role as a health coordinator is to create a culture of lifetime health for the children and families that our program serves." -Ever Collier, Richland County First Steps Early Head Start

dietitians employed by Head Start. These individuals are responsible for ensuring the health, safety and well-being of children enrolled in their programs.

A key component to the success of the network is the Health Coordinator/Manager. The coordinator manages health, nutrition and disabilities and mental health services for the centers within their local area. They are charged with increasing awareness of the critical role that the Health Services program plays in promoting the quality of life for children and families. They do this

Through partnerships and collaborations, Head Start ensures that every child has a medical and dental home. Once a home is established, required services include: an annual well check and dental exam, vision, hearing and speech screenings, immunization compliance, and follow-up services.

Ideally, a strong health network would consist of providers who are both engaged and active in meeting the health needs of the children served though Head Start programs. This can be done in simple ways. For example, an engaged and interested

provider can assist with the development of a Dental Home/Medical Home Network for an Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) center in their community. Such a network can be established when local providers who currently serve Head Start children, seek the support of their professional colleagues and encourage them to serve Head Start children and families. Once they have located other interested providers, they could provide their Head Start Center with a list of dental and medical providers in the area that may be able to provide a dental /medical home for children enrolled in Head Start. Finally, providers should consider serving on Early Head Start/Head Start Health Services Advisory Committees. These committees would benefit from the knowledge and expertise of the local provider.

Through effectively supporting both the Head Start Center and the families they serve, the HS Health Coordinator and local provider can make a significant impact on the health, including oral health of these young children and their families. The first and crucial step is to make the connection.

For more information on how you can impact your local Head Start Program, contact DHEC's Division of Oral Health at oralhealth@dhec.sc.gov or the South Carolina Association of Community Action Partnerships at <http://www.scacap.org/home0.aspx> and click on SC Head Start Association.

Did you know that:

- 1/3 of SC's working adults are uninsured
- Dental Problems are the #1 reason for emergency room visit for avoidable conditions in all rural counties but one
- ER Charges for dental related visits: \$9.1 million

Per Amy Brock Martin, DrPH, USC, RHRC(803) 898-1353



Water Fluoridation: Nature's Way to Prevent Tooth Decay

Community water fluoridation is one of the most effective, evidence-based public health interventions shown to prevent tooth decay. Studies have revealed that it is safe and inexpensive. Residents in communities that receive fluoridated water have 20-40% less tooth decay.

Analysis of the fluoridation issues that arose in Aiken, SC in the past year show how important it is to engage local dental and medical professionals as well as the general public and to keep them appropriately informed about the benefits of water fluoridation. As evidenced in Aiken, a well-informed community will be empowered to drive public policy that supports the health and the well-being of the whole community. "After more than 50 years, Aiken City Council's unanimous decision to retain the existing community water fluoridation speaks well to the engaged dental and medical safety net community in Aiken County," states Dr. Rocky Napier, DMD, Pediatric Dentist in Aiken.

Often overlooked is the role that water fluoridation can play in a community's safety net. It does not depend on an individual's access to care or to the availability of professional services. In addition, it is equally effective in preventing tooth decay among different socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups and also among the people who are unaware of the need for care. When a community like Aiken takes a stand to support the health and well-being of all its members, the impact can be significant.

S.C. DHEC School-Dental Prevention Programs: Sealing the Gap for School-Age Children

S.C. DHEC provides coordination for five School Dental Prevention Programs, which play a role in the safety net for school-age children in several important ways. The programs are Beaufort-Jasper-Hampton Comprehensive Health Services, Inc. (BJHCHS), Health Promotion Specialists (HPS), Little River Medical Center, Inc. (LRMC), Classy Smiles, Inc., and South Carolina Dental Screening Associates, LLP (SCDSA).

First, all children that participate in any of the programs receive dental screenings and referrals to dentists. Second, and critically important, the programs provide access to dental sealants for children who are low income, underinsured, or insured who face challenges in accessing oral health care. School-based and school-linked sealant delivery programs are strongly recommended by the US Task Force on Community Preventive Services on the basis of the strong evidence of effectiveness in reducing cavities on biting surfaces of posterior teeth among children at high risk for tooth decay.



example, BJHCHS developed school-based programs at Broad River Elementary and Ridgeland Schools which have on-site dental treatment facilities. A one time \$50 fee for students without insurance covers oral health preventive and simple restorative services. An estimated 343 students enrolled in the

program last year. Little River Medical Center formed partnerships with power companies Horry Electric, Progress Energy and Santee Cooper to provide power for LRMC's mobile dental van for providing dental treatment at schools. The three power companies donate power for the mobile unit. The \$500 a month that would have paid for the cost of power now helps pay for more services to children with limited or no dental insurance. Health

Promotion Specialists and Classy Smiles, Inc. have formed partnerships to ensure urgent care for children who would otherwise be unable to pay for those services.

Undoubtedly, the DHEC School-Dental Prevention Programs play an important

role in the safety net system and help to "seal the gap" for the school-age children they serve. For additional information on DHEC's School-Dental Prevention Programs, www.scdhec.gov/oralhealth.

"Last year, through these programs 10,761 children received dental sealants."

-Carol Reed, DHEC School Dental Program Coordinator

In addition, the School-Dental Prevention Programs have developed innovative ways to enhance the ability of low-income children to receive needed dental treatment. For

